

1-1-2008

# The Library

Chana Dukes

*Nova Southeastern University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/digressions>



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Dukes, Chana (2008) "The Library," *Digressions Literary Magazine*: Vol. 5, Article 18.

Available at: <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/digressions/vol5/iss1/18>

This Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by the CAHSS Journals at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digressions Literary Magazine by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact [nsuworks@nova.edu](mailto:nsuworks@nova.edu).

She is curled up in a large armchair in the corner of the vast library. She has passed most of her days there since the accident. Her nose is buried in some huge tome with a Latin title, and as usual, she is far too absorbed in the text to notice anything out of the ordinary. I'm peeking at her through the spaces in the shelves. I'm not really snooping. I just like to come and watch her read. I know if she realized someone was watching her, she'd probably be more than a little upset, but she is such a charming little thing, and I get so few visitors here in the library.

I vaguely remember her from before the accident. She comes in here about once every few weeks, an empty-headed little blonde thing, usually in a miniskirt or shorts. She checks out maybe one book, and returns the previous one. I didn't pay much attention to her then, but the accident changed her. Now she comes every day at noon, and holes up in a corner with a pile of books. She doesn't stop reading until closing, not even to eat or use the washroom. Once, I saw her glance out the window. Just once.

To tell the truth, I'm getting a little worried about her. She comes in wearing the same drab black dress every day. Her hair is slightly messy, and the bags under her pretty blue eyes just get bigger with time. She's lost a lot of weight, too. She looks like a rail.

She mutters to herself as she reads. It is always the same movement of her lips, and I'm sure she is entirely unconscious of it. She also flutters her hand against the side of her forehead. Her fingers are so tiny and dainty a child could break them. When she turns a page, she puckers her lips as if annoyed at the interruption and inconvenience.

I wonder sometimes where she learned to read Latin, and why she bothers to read the old "Historia" that has been gathering dust for so many years on the shelf. It pleases me that someone other than myself has found some interest in it, but then again, I only picked it up after I'd been here many years.

She cuts her finger on the edge of the page, and sticks it in her mouth to suck. Her fingertips are covered with similar cuts. I couldn't say why such an old book still has sharp edges.

I watch her for about another hour before it happens. She looks up, straight at me. Can she sense me? Impossible. I know I haven't made a sound, and even if I could have, she wouldn't see me. Would she?

I shrink back against the shelf. I sense more than see her as she gets out of her chair and places the book on a nearby stand. She is so graceful and light. I can't even hear her footsteps. Her tremulous voice breaks the silence.

“Is anybody there?”

Her voice seems on the verge of breaking. I want to go to her, to comfort her and reassure her that everything will be fine. I resist temptation as common sense reluctantly sifts back in, and flee towards my usual alcove.

A moment later, a heart-wrenching sound pulls me to my curtains. She is sitting on the floor nearby, sobbing quietly. She looks sad, and scared. I slip out and tiptoe towards her. She looks up at me, the tears staining her white cheeks. She is looking at my face. Today is the first time in close to two years that she’s noticed me. I am surprised she can sense me at all. She looks into my eyes with those sky-blue pools brimming with yet unshed tears. Suddenly, all of the pieces click into place and facts start registering. The library is dark. It is after closing time. You can hardly see the blood staining her black dress, but the cuts on her wrists are deep. As if in a dream, I turn in horror towards the chair where she was sitting. There is a small curled-up body lying limply, and books are scattered on the floor.

In all the years I have spent here, there have been no others, and I have been so alone. As much as I am saddened, my heart yet leaps in joy. I reach out my arms to enfold her, and whisper words of welcome as the tears flow once again.